

To the disciples of Mr. Lincoln on this floor, I commend the words of their great leader, in the earnest hope that they will sink deep into their minds and shape their action on this most important and momentous subject. Let those also who are attempting to set up imaginary lines of distinction between slave property and other property for the purpose of finding in those distinctions a license to take slave property without compensating the owner therefor, ponder and reflect well upon these words. Now, suppose the proposition in this House was to destroy by legislation any article of personal or real property, in which a large number of the people of the State had invested their money, to take from them their lands, their houses, their ships, their stocks of merchandise, without providing compensation therefor—with what favor, think you, would such a proposition be received? Would not the mover of such a proposition be regarded as a fit subject for the lunatic asylum? And yet this very thing is to-day gravely proposed in this hall. For the words of the distinguished authority I have just quoted place the liberation of slaves on the same ground as the destruction of any other property. It is, says Mr. Lincoln, the same thing. "The liberation of slaves is the destruction of property, property acquired by descent or purchase, the same as any other property."

Gentlemen upon the other side tell us that we should look to the Federal Government for compensation for slave property. I, as a citizen of Maryland, acknowledge my obligations to the Federal Government to the fullest extent within the sphere of its legitimate action, and claim its protection accordingly. But I humbly conceive that upon the true construction of the powers and duties of the Government at Washington, I, as a citizen of Maryland, can have no claim there for protection in this property, except in those cases where jurisdiction over it has been granted under the Constitution. Certainly I have no claim for compensation for slaves taken from me by the sovereign power of my own State. The question of compensation against the General Government for slaves impressed into the military service or carried off by its agents and officials, is a different question, and rests upon far different grounds. To the State of Maryland my allegiance is due, and allegiance and protection to life, liberty and *property* are reciprocal. The broad ægis of its protection should encircle me and extend over my rights of property in slaves as in every other kind of property recognized by its laws. When my demand for compensation for my emancipated slave is met with an order on the Federal Government, it is a virtual abnegation of my right and a denial of that protection which is due to me as a citizen from the power that claims my allegiance.

The State is bound to protect its citizens in the enjoyment of their rights in property of every kind and description recognized by its laws. The right in the General Government to make an appropriation to aid the States in the emancipation of their slaves, is a different question, and one which I do not here propose to discuss.

That the title of the slaveholder of Maryland to his slave is good and valid, has not been attempted to be controverted on this floor. That they are to him the representatives of hundreds and thousands of dollars; that they are, in the language of inspiration, his "money," are propositions too clear for argument or controversy.

Now, with these facts conceded, I should like to be informed how gentlemen on this floor can reconcile their action on this question, proposing as they do a wholesale destruction of property, with their ideas of right and stern justice. In the private relations of life there is not one member, I am sure, composing this body, who would not scorn the idea of being engaged, however remotely, in any scheme tending to the infliction of wrong and injury upon his neighbor. But, I would ask, is not the same code of morals binding here, that determines our duties and obligations outside this Hall? Do gentlemen cease to be men and accountable beings when they cross the threshold of this capitol, and assume the character of legislators? Is not the existence of the Supreme Judge of the Universe daily acknowledged in this place, when on every morning at the opening of our sessions the voice of the minister is lifted in prayer, invoking upon our deliberations His aid and interposition. Now, in all candor, I appeal to your intelligence, your sense of justice, your accountability before High Heaven, and ask you if it is wrong for you as men and individuals to deprive me of my property, without an equivalent, is it right for you to do that same thing in the character and capacity of law makers? The case is not met by saying that slaves in Maryland have so depreciated that scarcely any value attaches to them. They are still valuable to their owners, I repeat, and in time that value may be enhanced. But, granted all this, the man who takes from me unjustly one dollar is as culpable in the eye of both human and divine law as he who robs me of thousands. The principle is the same.

What is the argument of the gentleman from Talbot (Mr. Valliant) on this point? Property in slaves, says he, is practically destroyed. The State of Maryland did not do it. Therefore the State ought not to compensate the owners. This doctrine of the gentleman falls strangely and harshly upon my ear. Because my strong and unjust neighbor has commenced an aggression upon my rights, therefore you to whom I look and appeal for protection must join hands with the